



Sen. Charles Percy

Has Lightning Struck Charles H. Percy?

By Peter Lingert
Our Washington Bureau Chief
WASHINGTON — Mark him down as the wild kid of the 90th Congress. Color him red, white and blue. Keep an eye on him in the Republican presidential sweepstakes next year.
He is Charles (Chuck) Percy, the freshman senator from Illinois, the newest thing to a whirling dervish in the Washington scene. He is earnest, well-organized and indomitable, and he takes himself dead seriously.
He says he isn't running for anything. Maybe he still be-

lieves him. But the witnesses with their eyebrows knotted in confusion have heard too many disclaimers before.
An activist by nature, Percy ignores the Senate establishment custom that freshmen should be seen, not heard. Almost from the day he arrived to take the seat he won from veteran Paul Douglas, he has fractured the rules of silence. He has been heard of a freshman who starts cranking on the first day of school for Phi Beta Kappa honors.
The vindicated political columnist, who prides himself on calling out promising political hopefuls, have

Exclusive

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"discovered" Percy. They can grasp a man into the national spotlight against his will, but there is no evidence Percy has been baited on stage kicking and screaming.
He has held numerous "background" sessions with these assessors—at breakfast, lunch, dinner and in between—confiding his attitudes and outlook on Vietnam, civil

rights, poverty, the economy, the great national and international issues.
Mostly they have been impressed. A few sleepies have come away muttering, "too smooth . . . prepackaged . . . turns on too easy."
PERCY hasn't struck from the senatorial crowd eye of television, making himself readily available for the interview shows that can betray politicians quicker than a dis-granted horserace.
His office dutifully making his cranked out press releases on subjects as diverse as a college college

youngsters, the first, the appointment of a trade negotiator and the docking of an American ship at the segregated port of Cape Town, South Africa.
A sample of his sweep and restless energy was evident last weekend. He was in Milwaukee Friday morning for a business meeting, missing Gen. William C. Westmoreland's appearance before a joint session of Congress. Friday evening he attended a GOP reception in St. Louis, Mo.
Saturday at 7:30 a.m. he was in the East St. Louis (22)

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Sen. Percy discusses a road problem with Mr. and Mrs. William Klotz of Belleville as a line of constituents waits to talk to him Saturday morning at East St. Louis. (UPI)

Our Busy Freshman Senator



She has a Jacqueline Kennedy quality about her," says an old Washington partygoer, paying for the town's highest compliment. Daily News Photo

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federal funding, housing to complaints of constituents, time was needed that anybody who goes on that early on Saturdays to talk to a senator deserves his compliment. Percy was allotted for California at 11:30 a.m., primarily to resign from the board of the California Institute of Technology, but he was available in Western party leaders.
In the antique standards of this capital, the senator is actually "in." He has his attractive wife, Lorraine, one a prize catch at dinner parties.
"She has a Jacqueline Kennedy quality about her," says an old partygoer, paying for the town's highest compliment.

Percy, Dirksen Images Clash

On the issue, Percy comes through moderate to liberal. Rejection or any of his self-proclaimed high visibility is unlikely. But some observers suspect it lurks deep in the bosoms of veteran GOP liberals.

such as New York's Jacob Javits and New Jersey's Clifford Case, who have been served on the barricades of urban welfare measures for years only to see an unmarked Johnny-come-lately emerge as something new and freshly minted.
Percy's relations with Illinois senator Everett M. Dirksen, Illinois' lieutenant governor, are not as simple as such major issues as reapportionment, school prayer, Vietnam, and anti-busing legislation.
Percy insists their agreement to disagree hasn't marred their relations, and he says he regularly solicits Dirksen's advice.

But Dirksen can't have missed the point that Percy is being perceived as the new, progressive image of the modern Republican, in contrast to Dirksen's own identification with the Old Guard.

AS AN "old salesman" and an apostate of GOP unity, Percy has earned high marks. His associates note that shortly after he helped get Senate approval of the controversially won in the Republican primary in 1964, presidential election. The former Illinois senator was in deep political trouble. Thus he piles up preliminary wins in the called about lightning strike him next year at the GOP convention.

One of Smartest In Senate: Goldwater

His most conspicuous and surprising conservative booster in party ranks is Barry M. Goldwater, who got winged in the 1964 presidential election. The former Arizona senator was recently quoted as saying that "the guy who says that Chuck wants to be President, but not this time, Goldwater were on to say

Percy is "one of the smartest men who ever came to the Senate . . . He might be the most dangerous against President Johnson, provided he could show he was really knowledgeable about foreign policy—maybe more dangerous than a guy who had been around the woodpile too long."
Goldwater has been an outspoken supporter of former Vice President Richard M. Nixon for the 1968 nomination.
Goldwater entered a demerol, however, when he heard Percy's views opposing an escalation of the bombing in North Vietnam and calling for a public debate of further increases in U.S. troops in the war.
"It's kind of difficult to know just where he is, frankly," Goldwater said, adding, "He'll get solidified in that field some day."

THE YOUTHFUL senator (he's 47 but looks 10 years younger) scored his biggest legislative coup recently when he got all the Republican senators to endorse a low-cost housing plan he has proposed. It would create a private non-profit foundation, bolstered by federal funds, to enable small dwellers to own their own homes.

The unusual endorsement by all Republicans was accomplished one associate says, "by 25 per cent sheer leger and 25 per cent solemnity."
The bill has been referred to the Senate Banking Committee, leading one pessimistic congressional source to remark, "It has crossed the bridge of sighs and may never be heard of again."
But Percy is determined to push it through.

Search for Data Keeps Percy Busy

Not long ago, Percy called the director of the Central Intelligence Agency and asked for a top-level briefing, which was quickly granted him. He has had one of those briefings with his fellow freshman senator on world problems and has pulled into every nook and cranny of government in an insatiable quest for information. He doesn't keep these facts secret.
One veteran observer, asked



Dressed in riding clothes, Elizabeth Young of Belleville waits to meet Percy at the East St. Louis federal building. (UPI)

why other freshmen senators didn't follow the Percy routine, said, "most don't have the energy, curiosity and brass of Percy."
The Washington press has had a mixed reaction to him. Some voice skepticism at his political skills, nature and fire, but his near-perfect facade most shield hidden flaws. They would feel more comfortable about him if they heard him falter in reaching for a word or thought.

PERCY maintains that the party has a wealth of candidates for 1968, and he names the improbable Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York, Michigan's Gov. George Romney, Nixon and others for starters. But increasingly, party stalwarts watch him somewhat beautifully and wonder if a freshman, with no previous government experience, might not be able to make it.
He has been described as a possible "left-back candidate" in the event that Romney fails to catch fire in from party leaders fear is likely and Nixon

on looks too tired-worn to win.
"It's in the air," waiting to be launched," one seasoned party figure.
Percy hasn't exhibited the kind of stuff that suggests he may run for the presidency. They are young and bright but generally regarded as unseasoned in national terms. He has no press record, no record.
He is said to look handsome, but he's working on it. He's turned against himself. The young since Adam Snerman and John F. Kennedy demonstrated that so impressive humor is sure-fire in a state hiberna known as his first leave.
One Percy associate, discussing the senator's future, said drive, add, "He's the Avon he's right better." The ringing question is: "Should we wait?"

TUESDAY: Percy goes to Washington and meets the inner circles over the upstart even Bobby Kennedy—another reason for asking "Has lightning struck Charles Percy?"



Percy says he regularly solicits the advice of Illinois' senior senator, Everett M. Dirksen, with whom he differs on several major issues. (Daily News Photo by Edward Delage)